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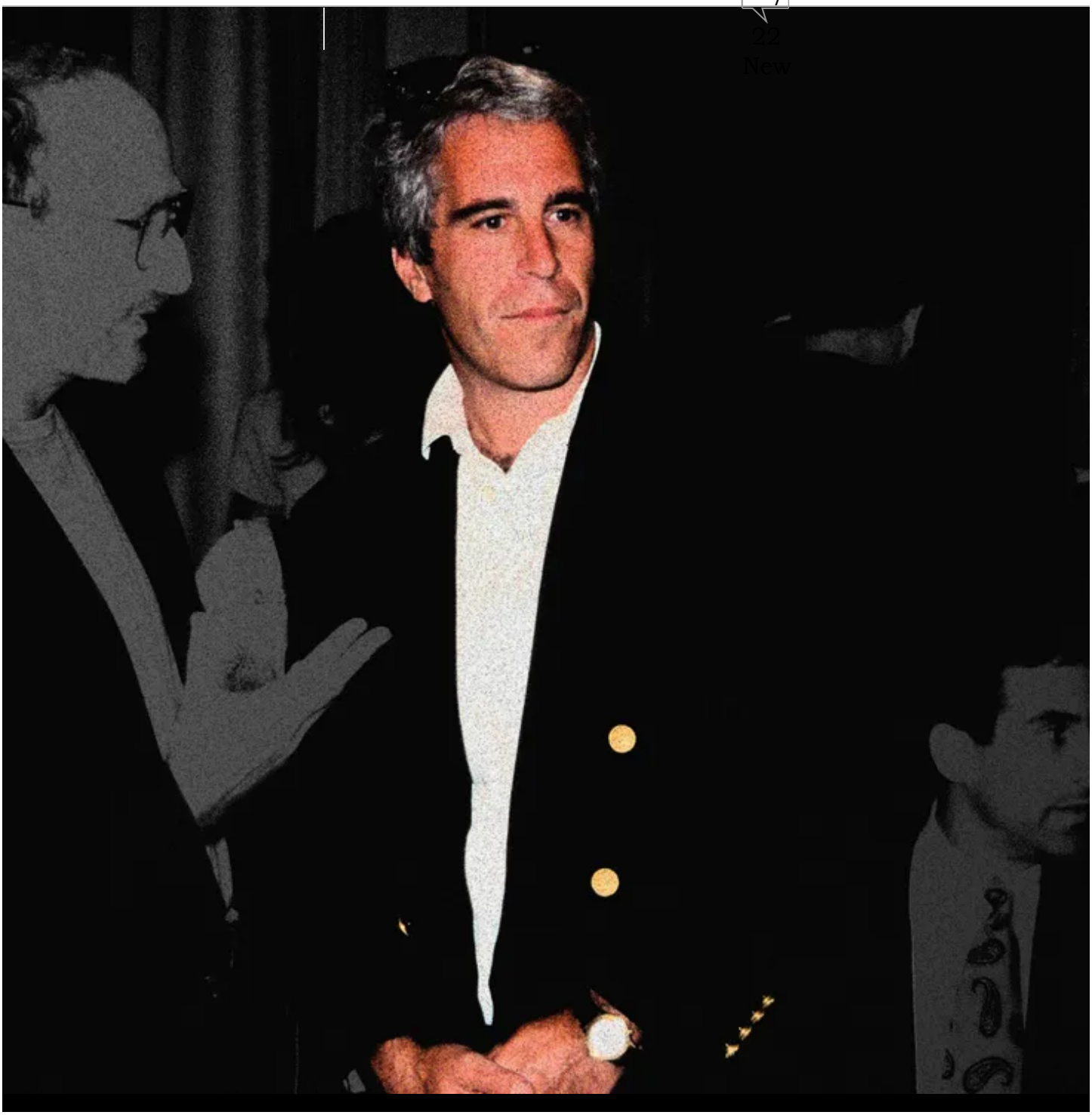

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The Jeffrey Epstein Mystery Roundtable Six

experts on the most intriguing and dangerous unanswered questions.

By Andrew Rice

Photo-Illustration: Intelligencer; Photo: Patrick McMullan via Getty Images

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Last Friday, the prosecution rested its case against Ghislaine Maxwell, the British heiress and former companion of Jeffrey Epstein. Her trial, in which she stands accused of federal sex-trafficking offenses, was supposed to provide some measure of resolution to the many mysteries surrounding the life and death of Epstein, the superwealthy globetrotting sexual predator who hanged himself (maybe) in a Manhattan jail cell in 2019. Instead, federal prosecutors called just a handful of witnesses, and rested their case far earlier than they had predicted before the trial. "It's surprising," says Julie Brown, the Miami *Herald* reporter whose 2018 investigative series is widely credited with reviving the criminal case against Epstein. The case against Maxwell will rest almost entirely on the testimony of four women who described being sexually abused by Epstein when they were teenagers. That evidence may still weigh heavily enough to convict Maxwell, who is accused of identifying and grooming Epstein's victims, as well as sometimes joining in his sexual activities. But it will do little to dispel the stench of speculation and conspiracy surrounding Epstein and his highly connected friends.

The prosecution made no attempt to explain the origin of Epstein's wealth, although it did present tantalizing evidence of the lascivious existence he was able to purchase with it. There were candid snapshots — part of the "vast trove" of photos seized at the time of Epstein's arrest — of him cavorting with Maxwell on his private jet. There were interior and aerial shots of his personal properties: the 21,000-square-foot mansion on East 71st Street; the 8,000-acre Zorro Ranch in New Mexico; the private Caribbean island of Little Saint James, which features steep cliffs fit for a Bond villain and a "piano pavilion" that resembles an occult temple. Epstein's personal pilot testified of flying the financier around the world with former and future presidents (Bill Clinton, Donald Trump), a royal family member (Prince Andrew, the Duke of York), celebrities (Kevin Spacey), and a continually replenished roster of beautiful young women. If anyone was expecting to hear what Epstein and his pals were *really* up to, though, they were disappointed.

Maxwell's trial has done little, either, to clear up the bewildering nature of her relationship with Epstein. At one point, as evidence of a long-term affair, prosecutors presented a bizarre Microsoft Word document from an Epstein computer, written in the third person by user "GMax," that read like a college recommendation for the couple. It said they were lovers for "11 years," beginning around the time of her father Robert Maxwell's death in 1991. Witnesses testified that they shared a bedroom in Palm Beach. Yet other witnesses have described her playing a role more akin to a household manager.

Thursday, Maxwell's aggressive attorneys will begin to present her defense, which may provide some further explanation. After that, 12 supposedly impartial jurors will determine whether she is guilty of sex-trafficking crimes. While we wait for that verdict, though, *New York* has decided to convene its own jury of sorts, made up of half-dozen people who know Epstein's life inside and out. Our expert panel is here to chew over, debate, and maybe even answer the Big Questions.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS

Julie Brown: Miami *Herald* reporter and the author of *Perversion of Justice*
Nick Bryant: reporter who first obtained and published Epstein's "little black book"
Lachlan Cartwright: editor-at-large at The Daily Beast who has covered the Epstein case
Vanessa Grigoriadis: co-creator of the podcast *Fallen Angel*, about Victoria's Secret, the chain's founder Leslie Wexner, and his relationship with Epstein
Jose Lambiet: South Florida private investigator who formerly worked as a gossip columnist for the Palm Beach *Post* and other news organizations
Gabriel Sherman: special correspondent for *Vanity Fair* who has written on Epstein's finances

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Were Epstein and Maxwell actually romantic partners, and if so, for how long? What role did she play in his life?

Vanessa Grigoriadis: I don't know if they were sleeping together or not, but she would tell

Epstein's above-age girlfriends that they were. They thought she did it to make them jealous.

Lachlan Cartwright: No doubt they hooked up at some point, but for Epstein, Maxwell played a more valuable role than just a love interest. She was his go-between not just amongst the women (and as the Feds are arguing in court, girls as young as 14) but to celebrities, scientists, businessmen, and social elites. The company Epstein craved and needed to keep the jig up.

Julie Brown: I think she really loved him, like a lot of women that fall in love with the wrong person. When she realized that she was never going to be able to marry him, she had to find other ways to stay in his life. And essentially, what she did was she began running his household. I think that most of his relationships were transactional, and that's the way he wanted it. He used and discarded people most of his life. Even Ghislaine. He discarded her too.

What did Maxwell get out of the trade?

Jose Lambiet: From the late '90s on, Epstein almost always showed up in Palm Beach with Maxwell. I believe she got money and some power out of her relationship with Epstein. Remember that her dad, Robert Maxwell,[1] didn't leave her much. He was flat broke and owed everybody money when he died.

Julie Brown: What else did she really have? Her father was dead. She no longer had the kind of money that she was accustomed to growing up. Her career was her social connections and being a socialite, so she made a bargain and decided she was going to stay with him, despite knowing everything that she knew about what he was doing. She's a victim in the sense that all adults, they are confronted sooner or later with someone in their life that they know is toxic and shouldn't be in their lives. And some people are better at saying, "Look, I'm going to walk away from this," than others. If you've ever had a relationship with someone you really loved a lot, it's very hard to walk away, especially if you don't feel like there's anything else in your life. And in her case … I'm not trying to make anybody feel sorry for her. This is just a reality.

How significant was Epstein's little black book?

Nick Bryant: Jeffrey Epstein had a house manager named Alfredo Rodriguez. Rodriguez

purloined all of Epstein's contacts, which are known at this point as the "black book." He tried to sell it to an attorney who was representing a number of the victims. And the attorney quickly called the FBI, and the FBI did a sting on Rodriguez, and he tried to sell the black book to the FBI, and the FBI busted him. In 2012, I went down to Florida and I was able to acquire the black book. That's what started my quest. I came back to New York and I had the black book, but no one wanted to touch the story. So I just sat on it for like three years until Gawker offered to not only publish the black book, but let me write some articles about it.

Jose Lambiet: The black book is very significant. Just by sheer association, it makes practically every name in it a suspect of sex crimes.

Vanessa Grigoriadis: No, it's not significant. It's like the list of followers that an influencer has. Just because he had the numbers doesn't mean he had a relationship with the people. And the numbers had to have come mostly from Ghislaine.

Julie Brown: A lot of people don't understand that it was Maxwell that really started that whole book. It was a computerized list that she would go in on the computer and she would update repeatedly. She was the person that gathered those social connections. It really wasn't Epstein.

Did Epstein really know all the people in the book?

Lachlan Cartwright: I spent a few days calling people named in that "little black book." Guess how many had actually met Epstein? Or had any dealings with him? Not many! Ghislaine put this address book together for her own benefit and like much of the Epstein reporting it has taken on a mythical life of its own.

Gabriel Sherman: I think the black book is another example of Epstein being full of shit. Many of the people in that book didn't even know Epstein or if they did it was on the most superficial level. When the black book became public, it was like, *Oh my God! This man is tight with the entire world of the elite!* I just think it was a case of more of his desperate social-climbing than it was necessarily a reflection of his influence.

Nick Bryant: It's very interesting. As soon as people's names come up in Epstein's black book, see how they run. Rodriguez circled a bunch of names in the black book, who he said had colluded with Epstein, and the FBI called a number of them material witnesses,

meaning they are witnesses that are integral in reporting a crime. I've written extensively about Epstein's network and the men who were named. Some of them were also accused by Virginia Giuffre.[2]

Julie Brown: Joe Recarey,[3] the lead detective, got pieces of the book from Rodriguez. What Rodriguez did was he circled certain names on that list. If you look at the list, what Recarey told me was that Rodriguez circled the names of people who were involved in Epstein's activities, or knew about what he was doing. For example, Trump is circled in there.

How close were Epstein and Donald Trump, really?

Lachlan Cartwright: The Trump/Epstein dynamic is a red herring.

Jose Lambiet: In Palm Beach, it's clear Epstein had access to Mar-a-Lago without being a paying member, and that's something Trump allows for some acquaintances.

Vanessa Grigoriadis: I've heard they were close. Jeffrey Epstein and Donald Trump flew around on private planes with flocks of girls, going wherever whenever (Atlantic City, Virgin Islands), and during these jaunts both were allegedly stone-cold sober, which is just so weird. They would both reference Morgan Fairchild as the ultimate specimen of feminine beauty. They were part of the scene of rich guys running after models — O.J., Trump, Weinstein, Epstein. Epstein of course had a misshapen penis and we don't know much about Trump in that regard, but we do know about his hands. Trump was pretty broke at the time. I talked to a model who dated Epstein who said that he called her once saying that he was going to be late because he had to go over to Donald's. Maybe it was just Epstein's sick sense of humor, but she said he told her Donald was upset and crying under the covers, so he was going to drop him off food. Trump was a joke to some of those models; she called him a "credit clown."

Julie Brown: Epstein and Trump are kind of two different animals, so to speak. Epstein really aspired to hang out with people who were very, very bright and brilliant scientists, and to talk about all kinds of esoteric research. And he just saw himself on a different playing field than Trump. Trump was a guy that made a lot of money, but made it off of his family. But they were both in Palm Beach, their houses were not that far from each other, and they hung in the same social circles, so they inevitably would cross paths. And I think

we know that, for example, Epstein molded his modeling company that he had a stake in, he kind of set it up the way that Trump had his modeling company set up. So I think there was a little bit of competition.

Gabriel Sherman: They had a falling out over a real-estate deal where they both bid on a mansion in Palm Beach.

How close was his relationship to Bill Clinton? Was he just another rich guy with a plane?

Lachlan Cartwright: Clinton was definitely closer to Epstein than Trump but it has been incredibly difficult over the years to pin down details of Clinton and Epstein's relationship.

Julie Brown: Clinton obviously had a relationship with Epstein, and I know that everybody has distanced themselves from him, but to some degree, it seems like there are things that don't make any sense. Why are there people that say Clinton was on the island when he's saying he wasn't on the island? I think everybody knows that he was on the island. Gabriel Sherman wrote a *Vanity Fair* piece where Doug Band basically said, "Yes, he was on the island." Why is your former right-hand man saying now that you were on that island, and if you were on that island, why would you lie about it?

Jose Lambiet: Frequent use of the jet plus hosting the president sure would make anyone suspicious that Epstein knew Clinton better than Trump. If I wrote a book about Epstein, I'd title it *The Gala of Whores*. Just about everybody associated with the story is truly a whore.

Why were so many academics, especially at Harvard, so taken with him?

Vanessa Grigoriadis: People love money.

Jose Lambiet: With academics, it's always the money. Plus I believe Epstein truly had a keen interest in science.

Gabriel Sherman: I talked to Steven Pinker[4] at one point and he told me that he tried to have a real conversation with Epstein about science and after a minute, Epstein clearly was out of his depth and got all pissed off and changed the subject. He could talk about a lot for

a short amount of time but if you actually really engaged this guy, he was full of shit.

Why did Alexander Acosta cut such a lenient plea deal?

Lachlan Cartwright: Why does anyone cut a deal? Epstein had the best lawyers: Kenneth Starr, Alan Dershowitz,[5] Roy Black, and Gerry Lefcourt. They were killers and they were applying constant and unrelenting pressure on Alexander Acosta[6] and his office.

Julie Brown: I think they were to some degree outlawyered, but they allowed themselves to be outlawyered. They were all enamored with each other. I know one of the prosecutors told me words to the effect that they were all sitting in the room, and there was Kenneth Starr and Alan Dershowitz and Jay Lefkowitz, and he was sitting there thinking to himself how much money an hour they were all making. Alexander Acosta had ambitions to be a Supreme Court justice. There was a reason that Epstein hired Ken Starr and Jay Lefkowitz. These were people that were in the Federalist Society, which had a say on what conservative judges would be nominated to the Supreme Court. So he certainly was on a trajectory.

Jose Lambiet: I believe Acosta was starstruck by the dream team that Epstein gathered for his defense, guys like Ken Starr and Alan Dershowitz. I also believe there was political pressure from above on Acosta to go easy on Epstein. And we shouldn't assume that Acosta was a competent U.S. Attorney. I often believe more in incompetence than corruption.

Julie Brown: Buried in an appendix to the DOJ report on the case, it said that Alex Acosta's emails during the time that this deal was being negotiated and signed, just disappeared. How does that happen? That's something that just kind of sticks in my head.

What about Acosta's reported explanation that Epstein "belonged to intelligence"? Is it likely Epstein was a spy? If so, what would his use have been to the intelligence community?

Julie Brown:I really don't believe it. If that was true, we would probably know by now. I think that Epstein did a very good job of telling people, probably including his own lawyers, that he had connections like that. There would've been no reason, really, for them

to check it out. And it was a good excuse for Acosta to use when he went to try to get confirmed for his Cabinet post. If it's the CIA, you're not going to find out. You can't just call and find out whether it's true or not.

Lachlan Cartwright: It is total and utter bollocks (propagated by muppets trying to sell books and podcasts) to say that Epstein was a Mossad asset or part of the intelligence community.

Nick Bryant: It's very obvious that Acosta was told to stand down. Who has the power to tell a U.S. Attorney to stand down from a child-abuse investigation? You've got the attorney general and you've got the president. So those orders must have come from very high. There had to have been some intervention by another organization, which I believe was intelligence.

Gabriel Sherman: I mean, Epstein was a master bullshit artist. He definitely liked people to have the impression that he was a spy. He cultivated the idea. There's no evidence whatsoever to support the idea that he was formally or even informally working for the CIA or Mossad or any of the agencies. I think he cultivated this entire persona of this man of mystery. And I think on some level it shows you how gullible and how stupid billionaires and rich people are, that they could be seduced by this guy and sucked into his lies. Things took on a life of their own, and word spread. One rich guy tells another rich guy: "You have to meet this brilliant guy Epstein."

Steve Bannon: [7]

> *Of course he's an intelligence asset. We just don't know whose.*
>
> —quoted in Wolff, *Too Famous*, p. 317

Why did so many friends and business associates — for instance Leon Black, Bill Gates — with a great deal of reputational equity at stake, continue to interact with a convicted sex offender?

Jose Lambiet: Living in Palm Beach for two decades and my current job as a private

investigator for this country's elite have both shown me that the rich always look out for each other. Nothing one of them can do is shameful enough to warrant getting canceled, for all kinds of reasons, including social, financial, and moral. Since most of Palm Beach's rich have skeletons in their giant closets, pointing the finger is most unwelcome.

Gabriel Sherman: He by all accounts was a psychopath, right? He is the kind of person who had no conscience and could lie convincingly. I think he cultivated this aura of himself, that he was this connected person who had Prince MBS[8] on speed dial. I think people like Gates were brought into this world and it was like this billionaire club. Epstein would host these gatherings at his house and it was this secret society and there were models and beautiful women around. I think a lot of rich guys at that level, with their egos, their money has made them believe that they're above the rules of society.

Vanessa Grigoriadis: He gave them permission to feel manly. They liked being close to an illicit lifestyle, and figured if everyone else was doing it, it was okay.

Julie Brown: You would think that Epstein wouldn't be able to manipulate someone like Bill Gates, but I don't think anybody is non-manipulable if you are adept at finding that one thing that gets that person's attention, and that's what he did.

Lachlan Cartwright: People like Gates are disconnected from society and enact their urges in a weird way. Hanging out with Epstein was for him a release. As I've reported it was an escape from his loveless marriage and an avenue where he could hold court in the confines of the somewhat secure environment of Epstein's Upper East Side mansion. And when I say "somewhat," you had people like Michael Wolff at some of these dinners and gatherings.

So what was going on inside the mansion?

Gabriel Sherman: A lawyer who has represented one of the victims told me that after getting out of jail in Palm Beach, Epstein was very careful — at least while he was in the United States — about not doing anything with girls under 18. There's no evidence that a lot of these men who socialized with Epstein were involved with underage girls. I think some of Epstein's value to them was the fact that he just populated his social world with beautiful 22-year-old or 19-year-old models. That's my sense. Epstein surrounded himself with a lot of powerful men who didn't necessarily commit sex crimes, but they clearly

looked the other way, and they didn't think it was strange that this 40- or 50-something-year-old man was surrounded by 20-year-olds all the time. I don't think just because you knew Epstein meant that you were part of something criminal. I think you were part of something definitely sordid and unethical and immoral.

Vanessa Grigoriadis: I've heard that the scene at his house wasn't actually all that fun, and even though people wanted to check out the amazing townhouse, it was, most of the time, all old people and a few young women who didn't talk.

What about when Epstein traveled to, among other places, his private island?

Gabriel Sherman: I think while he was here, he was careful not to break the law post-incarceration. But we know he traveled the world on his jet. In the Virgin Islands or the Middle East or Africa, all bets were off.

Any theories about what that "piano pavilion" structure was for?

Jose Lambiet: No idea. Epstein was pretty weird with some stuff. In his Palm Beach house, for example, I remember he had one room with an old-fashioned dentist's chair blinged out with all the equipment. Antique stuff but really creepy, like something out of *Marathon Man*.

How much money did Epstein really have at this point?

Vanessa Grigoriadis: His assets, including his properties in New York and Palm Beach, were valued at $559 million in a one-page document filed in federal court in connection with his July 2019 bail hearing.

Jeffrey Epstein (in conversation with Steve Bannon):

> *JE: Money, at the level we are talking about, has an independent life. In some sense nobody, no one person, controls it. It is part of the world's capital. It has to be managed …*

SB: I'm not even sure what that means.

JE: It means money is infrastructure. No matter who uses that infrastructure, saints or sinners, we need it to work.

—quoted in Wolff, *Too Famous*, p. 300

Where did Epstein's money come from?

Gabriel Sherman: After all of these years, there are only two publicly named clients of Epstein's supposed money-management firm. First, there was Leslie Wexner.[9] That lasted until 2007. Then after Epstein got out of jail, his next client was Leon Black.[10]

Lachlan Cartwright: Ask yourself why Wexner gave Epstein full power of attorney over his affairs? It is extraordinary! That then allowed Epstein to manipulate Wexner's finances and take control of his private jet and the now infamous Upper East Side mansion. Epstein then parlayed the appearance of wealth to con other rich and gullible men.

What was up with him and Leslie Wexner?

Gabriel Sherman: Epstein's longest relationship was with Wexner. It dated back to around 1986, a few years after Epstein had been fired from Bear Stearns. If you just look at the trajectory of Epstein's life, shortly before he met Wexner, he was living in a modest apartment, a one-bedroom on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Within about five years, he's living in the largest private townhouse in the city, which formerly belonged to Wexner. His entire life, all of the things that we associate with Jeffrey Epstein — the house, the jet, the Palm Beach mansion — all of those things he got within several years of meeting Leslie Wexner.

Vanessa Grigoriadis: Wexner was just insanely rich back then, one of the only billionaires in the country, and since Epstein had general powers of attorney over his money, he may have been able to siphon off more than the $47 million Wexner later claimed he took. They were close friends. Epstein had a house, and a big presence, in Wexner's hometown of Columbus, Ohio. They went on shopping trips to Europe together. No one has been able to figure out exactly what the relationship was about, but Wexner was absolutely devoted to him and his counsel. Wexner was married late, at 55. *New York* ran a cover story about

him when he was killing it in retail called "The Bachelor Billionaire." He also now has four children with his wife.

Did Wexner really just *give* him the townhouse?

Gabriel Sherman: It's very murky. At one point, it was reported that Wexner gave it to him for a dollar. In *Vanity Fair*, I reported that there were transfer documents that show that Epstein paid $20 million for it. There's no way to know exactly the financial arrangements around the house. You know, Epstein could have paid $20 million but what if that $20 million had come from Wexner? What we do know is that Epstein got the house around five to seven years after the time he was living in a one-bedroom apartment. It's not logical for someone with his credentials to make that amount of money in that short of a time.

Was he actually a skilled investor? Or an investor of any kind?

Gabriel Sherman: People who have been to Epstein's offices say he had no Bloomberg Terminals. He didn't have a team of analysts. People said he didn't even have a computer on his desk. Essentially, Epstein was a fund-of-funds manager. He would direct his clients' money to big, powerful institutions and hedge funds and they would invest it. He didn't do a lot of the trading himself. But Epstein would be in control. He was the middle man. That's why Wall Street banks were so interested in cultivating Epstein, because he was a gatekeeper to Wexner's fortune. In the late '80s and 1990s, Wexner was one of the richest people in America.

Was Epstein laundering money for wealthy Saudis, as he implied, or anyone else?

Jeffrey Epstein (in conversation with Steve Bannon):

> *SB: Isn't that your business, hiding money for Third World dictators? What you actually do is launder money for the worst people in the world.*
>
> *JE: What is money laundering?*

–quoted in Wolff, *Too Famous*, p. 301

Julie Brown: He probably didn't think of it as money laundering. He thought of it as just helping people save money and hide money from paying taxes. When you help people who have so much money that we can't even fathom it, like entire royal families for example, help them put their money away somewhere, and you get a cut of it, it earns you an awful lot of money.

Was he a blackmailer? Either an explicit one or an implicit one?

Vanessa Grigoriadis: No clue, but we still have no evidence of this.

Jose Lambiet: Of course. If you are a well-known man who sleeps with an underage girl at a friend's house, you automatically become the friend's bitch. It's an old CIA source-recruiting technique back from the Cold War era. Still, I'm not sure he would have become as rich as he was if all he did was blackmail folks. Blackmailing people for as much money as Epstein had would've made him a target of international assassins.

Julie Brown: He clearly had cameras all over that mansion. We know from history that men sometimes do stupid things, and I think that Epstein knew which of these men that he associated with could be manipulated in that kind of way. So yeah, I absolutely think that there's some of that that happened. I think it depended on who he wanted for what purpose. I think he just had a lot of different cons going on, depending on whether it was a connection that he needed to the British royal family or the Saudi royal family, or God knows what other people that he wanted to do business with.

Nick Bryant: I believe that there was obviously blackmail going on. Why else would you have the hidden cameras? But what people miss about this, and this is a very important point, is that Jeffrey Epstein by himself could not be a blackmail artist. Some of these men who he reportedly recorded are some of the most powerful men in the world. There's no way that Epstein could be blackmailing these people unless there was an organization behind him, and Alexander Acosta said it was intelligence. I believe that there is some dark malignant corner of our intelligence services that blackmails politicians. I mean, political blackmail is as old as politics itself, almost, and Americans are very naïve about the blackmail that takes place in their political system.

Gabriel Sherman: If blackmail took place it was the implicit kind. It was the fact that these powerful men knew what Epstein knew about them. When he made financial requests, they willingly went along with it because they knew that the costs of not were too great. A source told me this story. One time a wealthy real-estate person in New York bumped into Epstein, and Epstein gave him some run-of-the-mill tax advice or financial advice, conversationally. The guy didn't think anything of it. Then a month or so later, a bill shows up at his office: an invoice for financial advice. For a lot of money. If that's true, I could imagine if this person had participated in Epstein's sex ring, and Epstein then sends this person a bill, that's a case where it sounds like implicit blackmail. In this case, the wealthy guy didn't pay. It was just like he was put off by it.

Do we think there is a vault filled with incriminating photos and videos?

Jose Lambiet: There's likely a repository of written and maybe digital information about the habits of Epstein friends.

Nick Bryant: A former *60 Minutes* producer, Ira Rosen, wrote a book and said that Ghislaine Maxwell had told him that Epstein had blackmail footage on both Clinton and Trump.

Lachlan Cartwright: This is the fantasyland stuff. There is no evidence of it. None. If those tapes existed we would know about them by now. I've spent a shitload of time running this down and can confidently tell you there are no videos and any "vault" was just as likely to safely secure Epstein's lunch as it was secret videos.

Michael Wolff:

> *The FBI did not list in its findings a set of pictures that Epstein sometimes removed from his safe to show friends: a dozen or so snapshots from shortly before their quarrel in 2004 of Donald Trump at Epstein's Palm Beach home posing with a variety of young women in various stages of undress — some topless — sitting on his lap, touching his hair, laughing and pointing at a suggestive stain on the front of the future president's pants.*
>
> –Wolff, *Too Famous*, p. 314

Who was Patrick Kessler, the purported hacker who approached David Boies and the New York *Times*, claiming to have Epstein's videos? Any reason to believe he was for real?

Julie Brown: When the *Times* was doing their investigation, I had been warned by people that I really trusted that Kessler was a phony. I still kept poking at it because I knew the *Times* was looking at it. But every time I got looking at what was going on, it just seemed to me like *this is kind of bullshit*. I just felt like it didn't make any sense at all. I believe that what he was up to, was that this was a phony guy who was set up to try to discredit these lawyers. It was sort of like if Epstein had been alive, that would be something that Epstein would've done. I have my own theory about who did it, but I probably want to keep it to myself, because the kinds of people that would've been behind this aren't nice people. You know what I mean?

Lachlan Cartwright: The New York *Times*, God bless 'em, got hoodwinked by this Kessler whackjob. The *NYT* assigned a crack team of at least four journalists to the story and a crew from their FX Hulu show *The Weekly* followed the reporters as they tried to crack the story. They even boast on that TV special about having an "air gapped" laptop in a special room within the *Times* building in anticipation of reviewing the files that Kessler had promised. No prizes for guessing that the bloke never delivered and turned out to be a complete charlatan.

Nick Bryant: I don't know who he worked for, or on whose behalf he was doing it. The only thing I can say is, it very much tainted David Boies.[11]

If the fabled materials from the vault do exist, will the public ever know?

Julie Brown: I really don't think that they're going to ever see the light of day. I don't think the Feds are ever going to release them. The only other people that would know about its contents are probably the people that are now in charge of his estate, the people in his closest, closest inner circle. I mean, do I think that the FBI should release everything? Yes. Do I think that they should at least investigate with the goal of prosecuting more people who were involved? Yes. Will they? I don't think so. Look at what

prosecutors are facing with Maxwell. She is pulling out all the stops. It's going to be surprising if they try to bring charges against anybody else.

How do you think Epstein most likely died?

Nick Bryant: I doubt that we will never know for certain exactly how Jeffrey Epstein died. There were many, many anomalies that night. So there seems to have been a convergence of factors that enabled Epstein to meet his demise. But I try not to speculate on that particular meme.

Vanessa Grigoriadis: Almost certainly suicide.

Gabriel Sherman: I firmly believe that Epstein killed himself. I don't believe this idea that there was some grand conspiracy where he was killed by the powerful to prevent his secrets from coming out. I think in this case, he was a psychopathic narcissist who couldn't stand the idea of spending the rest of his life in jail and he also didn't want to allow his victims to get any justice for his crimes. The ultimate power that he had at that point was to take his own life.

Jose Lambiet: I believe Epstein was too much of a hedonist and a narcissist to resort to suicide. From what I knew about him when he lived mostly in Palm Beach in the winter, Epstein wasn't the profile of a suicide victim.

Julie Brown: I don't think he did it by his own hand. I don't think he committed suicide alone. I think that he had help. The fact that you had two guards that were asleep at the wheel, so to speak, and the cameras were gone, it suggests to me that there was something that was set up ahead of time to make sure that these guards weren't paying attention, to make sure that the cameras weren't working, to make sure that he didn't have a roommate in there. I mean, there was just too many things in there that indicate to me that this was something that was pre-planned, and it was not just Epstein just deciding, "I'm going to kill myself today." Now, whether it was a murder, or whether it was something that he set up, I'm sort of split in the middle. But I don't think he did it by his own hand. I don't think it would be possible for him to break three bones in his neck that way, that violently. There's too many holes in this whole thing.

Lachlan Cartwright: Epstein's death was a conspiracy: a conspiracy of clowns. From the overworked prison guards to the chronic mismanagement of the Manhattan Metropolitan

Correctional Center where he died, it allowed for a very desperate man who had finally run out of cards and favors to play to kill himself. You gotta think somewhere Epstein is having the last laugh.

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